



**Learning and Reflection Forum Series**  
**February 20, 2018 2:00 - 3:30 pm EST**

**Engaging Partners to Advance and Sustain Cultural and Linguistic Competence  
in the Current Climate**

The current climate in our nation presents many challenges to engage others in efforts to advance and sustain cultural and linguistic competence (CLC). The Leadership Institute identified three cross-cutting issues occurring nationally that demand attention and require concerted efforts among all partners in the developmental disabilities network. These challenges include: (1) competition for and uncertainty about funding for needed programs, services, and supports; (2) reticence within the developmental disabilities network to discuss issues that are controversial and which involve race, ethnicity, and culture; and (3) differing views on the impact of inequities in services and supports experienced by individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

The purpose of the Learning and Reflection Forum is to offer tools and strategies to address these challenges including the use of constructive dialogue, getting “buy in,” and promoting equity for CLC. This forum will cite selective practices from the literature and feature the experiences of people within the network, including individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, about how they are confronting and addressing these challenges.

**Objectives**

Participants will:

1. Describe strategies to engage partners and others in difficult conversations about CLC.
2. Identify approaches to obtain “buy in” for CLC from leadership, faculty and staff, advocacy communities, and other partners concerned with developmental disabilities.
3. Define what equity and inequity mean within the context of developmental disabilities services and supports and how to partner with others to take action.

## Presenter Bios



**Stephanie Autumn** brings extensive experience in developing, implementing, and evaluating programs in tribal communities. A member of the Hopi Indian tribe, Ms. Autumn possesses 38 years of local, national, and international American Indian advocacy and policy work experience as well as working with tribal communities to address issues specific to tribal youth. Ms. Autumn has worked with diverse tribes throughout the country on issues of American Indian adult and juvenile justice, substance abuse prevention, restorative justice, and tribal youth mentoring programs. She has managed projects on American Indian juvenile domestic assault, a statewide restorative justice program, pre and post-release services for American Indian offenders, tribal mentoring, and tribal truancy. She served as the project director of three Department of Justice funded Training & Technical Assistance Centers funded for tribal youth, and has provided training and technical assistance to over 135 tribal grantees. Ms. Autumn has represented the International Treaty Council and other American Indian Human Rights organizations at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland and New York, Russia, Japan, Africa, Libya and throughout Europe and the United States.



**Dr. Maria Mercedes Avila** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Pediatrics and the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) Program Director at the University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine. For the past 15 years, Dr. Avila has been involved in numerous SAMHSA and HRSA's MCH programs. Dr. Avila provides consultation on Cultural and Linguistic Competency and has trained more than 3500 providers across nine states and 50 organizations. Since 2011, Dr. Avila has been invited to lead 32 national presentations and 60+ regional sessions on topics related to health disparities, social justice in health care, culturally responsive care and practice, and cultural competence in advocacy and leadership. Dr. Avila is Adjunct Assistant Professor of Nursing and Communication Sciences and Disorders where she teaches *Racism and Health Disparities in the US* courses that reach more than 300 undergraduate and graduate students and 110 medical residents annually.

Through her local, state and national work, she has been nominated for eleven teaching, service and research awards, and has received: the 2014 Edith D. Hendley award recognizing a woman who has demonstrated excellence in research, scholarship and teaching, and who has performed dedicated service to women; the 2015 Kroepsch-Maurice Excellence in Teaching Award; the 2016 ALANA Outstanding Faculty Award; and the 2016 Child Mind Institute National Change Maker Local Hero Award. Dr. Avila was most recently recognized with the 2016 Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) Multicultural Council Leadership in Diversity National Award.



**Max Barrows** is a young man with Autism who believes in self-determination! Since 2007, Max Barrows has worked for Green Mountain Self-Advocates as the Outreach Coordinator. He provides training and technical assistance statewide, traveling to local self-advocacy groups around Vermont. He offers support to run their groups more effectively, and updates them on legislative issues that impact persons with disabilities. Max Barrows has talents as a public speaker that has been called upon often, to MC at conferences and delivers keynote speeches. Max is one of the founding members of his local self-advocacy group called Capitol Advocates Together (CAT). Max is currently on the board of Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE). Max loves meeting new people in all these roles and learning more

about the world. In his spare time, Max has strong interests in extreme weather, traveling, and sports. Max excels at writing scripts for short videos about peer to peer connections. He is skilled at filming, editing, and posting videos on YouTube.



**Christine Pisani** has multiple family members with a disability, but began working for people with disabilities as a college student at the University of Idaho, (UI) in 1986. This experience provided her first-hand observations of how inhumane our society is capable of being toward our most vulnerable populations. After college, Christine continued to work in various positions that had a connection to people with disabilities. In 1996 she began work at the Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities and continues to draw on her valuable direct work experience. Her work at the Council presents opportunities to work people with disabilities, families, and policymakers statewide. Early in her work at the Idaho legislature she observed that many

decisions were made about the lives of people with disabilities, with very few people with disabilities in the room. Since that time, Christine worked to establish a statewide network of informed adults with developmental disabilities who now spend time each year working to educate legislators about issues important to them.

In the early 2000's she served as President of the Ada County Human Rights Task Force. While serving in this role she worked with statewide human rights advocates to eliminate the Hayden Lake Aryan Nations compound located in north Idaho, while also creating community events, such as "Bite of Boise" to highlight the diverse and rich cultural traditions and ethnic foods of all of the areas community members. Christine holds a Masters of Education degree in Special Education with an emphasis in public policy. She is also a graduate of the State of Idaho's Certified Public Management program. She is a proud and loving mother to her two daughters and their rescue dog Percy. She enjoys gardening, backpacking, traveling, and learning the history of places. She is an advocate for women's rights, the rights of people with disabilities, humane treatment of animals, wildlife and wilderness preservation.